United Nations A/54/261

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 August 1999
English
Original: English/French

Fifty-fourth session
Item 81 of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/82 of 4 December 1998, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", in which the Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region; encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (see Assembly resolution 46/36 L); encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, which poses a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation; invited all States of the region to address, through various forms of cooperation, problems and threats posed to the region, such as terrorism, international crime and illicit arms transfers, as well as illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which jeopardize the friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society; requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region; and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region."

2. To date, the following Governments have replied, and their responses are reproduced in section II below. Any replies or notifications received subsequently will be issued as addenda to the present report.

* A/54/150.

99-24355 (E) 170999

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[27 July 1999]

1. Algeria fully supports the objectives and activities contemplated by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/82, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region".

2. Algeria has always cooperated and participated in all projects and initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, concerted action and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. This attitude is proof of its firm conviction that only a genuine partnership can help to establish an area of stability and security in the Mediterranean region and promote an area of common development and prosperity. It is in this spirit that Algeria has become involved in the Barcelona process, which seeks to establish a framework for renewed partnership.

3. After the Barcelona conference in November 1995, which laid the foundation for a new relationship between the two sides of the Mediterranean based on partnership and common interests, the process was given new impetus by the mid-term ministerial meeting, held at Palermo, Italy, in June 1998, and the third Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference, held at Stuttgart, Germany, in April 1999, which provided a political stimulus to relations in the European-Mediterranean region, put the process back on track and gave it a comprehensive, balanced and multidimensional approach based on the necessary balance between the three parts of the Barcelona Declaration. As a result of these two conferences, it has been possible to move ahead in the areas of terrorism and the charter for peace and stability in the Mediterranean region.

4. Algeria has spared no effort in helping to consolidate this progress and to protect and strengthen it as a fundamental political achievement.

5. Algeria considers that peace and stability in the Mediterranean region are essential prerequisites for economic and social development. Any confidence-building measure aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean region implies just and lasting solutions to conflicts, the peaceful settlement of disputes and concrete, effective disarmament measures, involving, *inter alia*, the accession of all States of the region to the multilateral agreements banning weapons of mass destruction (such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Convention on Chemical Weapons) and the submission of all their nuclear facilities to international monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

6. The political and security partnership should be based on the littoral States' shared political will to take up common challenges in a spirit of solidarity through respect for the principles enshrined in international law, especially those of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, the non-use of force or the threat of force and respect for sovereignty. This would help to strengthen democracy, consolidate the rule of law and eliminate new types of threats to peace and security, in particular the scourge of terrorism.

7. Owing to its transnational nature, terrorism poses a serious threat to the security and stability of the region, to State institutions and to the rule of law. For this reason, it requires sustained coordination and cooperation of all the Mediterranean countries, which must take all necessary steps to eliminate it.

8. With regard to the economic and financial partnership, Algeria stresses the need to reduce development disparities between the two shores of the Mediterranean and, in this connection, calls for a strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDAL) financial programme. Algeria also advocates the promotion of foreign direct investment flows and their just and equitable distribution among countries of the region. It considers that foreign direct investment is necessary to enhance the progress made by the partner countries of the Mediterranean region in the areas of macroeconomic consolidation and economic transition. Algeria also calls for a review of the debt issue and of the possibility of debt-equity swaps. Clearly, what is taking place is the establishment of new economic relations and the promotion of a partnership for development. The free-trade area should not be an end in itself, but rather a means of achieving the more ambitious objective of creating an area of shared prosperity.

9. With respect to the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs, Algeria considers that there can be no free-trade area, presumably involving the unhampered flow of goods and services, unless the important issue of the movement of persons is taken into consideration. The administrative procedures for issuing visas must be simplified and improved in order to promote movement back and forth across the Mediterranean. In this regard, Algeria welcomes the holding in March 1999 of the first Euro-Mediterranean expert seminar on migration and the movement of persons, particularly as the Ministers for Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the need for follow-up on this important issue at Stuttgart.

10. Algeria is also strongly convinced of the importance of the Mediterranean Forum, which provides a useful framework for coordination and dialogue. Owing to its informal nature, this mechanism can make a significant contribution to other regional mechanisms and, in particular, to the Barcelona process. It gives member countries an opportunity to consider political and security problems and economic, social and cultural issues in the region.

11. As a result of the latest ministerial meetings, at Palma de Mallorca, Spain, on 6 and 7 April 1998, and Valletta, Malta on 3 and 4 March 1999, significant progress has been made in addressing issues related to security and stability in the region. For example, a list of measures to prevent and combat terrorism has been adopted, and it has been decided to hold periodic ad hoc meetings to consider this important issue. With regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability, the 11 countries of the Forum, bearing in mind the document submitted by the Presidency of the European Union, have helped to make significant progress towards the development of that instrument.

12. Within this same framework of cooperation and dialogue in the Mediterranean region, which Algeria has always supported, the fifth Conference of Ministers of the Interior of Western Mediterranean Countries, in which Algeria, France, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia participated, was held in Algiers on 20 and 24 June 1999. The important decisions taken at this meeting demonstrate the usefulness and value of this framework for coordination, which is another milestone in the effort to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

Finland (common reply of the European Union)

[Original: English]
[9 August 1999]

1. The member States of the European Union have co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 53/82 on strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, adopted by consensus at the General Assembly. The European Union wishes to provide the following common reply on some of the activities realized by the Union aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the said resolution.

2. The European Union recalls its previous common replies (A/48/514/Add.1, A/50/300 and A/51/230), reaffirms the principal points stated in those documents and adds the following observations.

3. The European Union, convinced that the multiple existing problems of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region demand a holistic, multidisciplinary and concerted approach, has continued its work on giving impetus to the different existing initiatives in order to improve dialogue and cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean. In this sense, efforts have been carried out in the framework of the common foreign and security policy and the Barcelona process, which is the core of European Union action in the region. Efforts have been carried out in this respect also in other forums and organizations, such as the Western European Union (WEU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. In order to avoid possible duplication or interference among them, complementarity is regarded as an essential basis of dialogue.

4. Confirming the importance it gives to the Mediterranean, the European Union has initiated, in the framework of the development of the Amsterdam Treaty (articles 11, 12 and 13.2) and the implementation of the conclusions of the Presidency of the Vienna Council (chap. VII, point 74), the definition and elaboration of a common strategy on the Mediterranean region, as an internal instrument to develop its policy in the area of taking into special account the Barcelona process and the Middle East peace process.

5. The European Union strongly believes in the contribution of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership to constructive developments in the Mediterranean region. The conclusion of the Vienna European Council of 12 December 1998 reaffirmed the importance of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and emphasized satisfaction with the dialogue being developed in this forum, thus reflecting the positive ad hoc meeting held by the ministers of foreign affairs in Palermo (3 and 4 June 1998) that contributed to the preparation of the third Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, held in Stuttgart (15 and 16 April 1999). The Stuttgart conference confirmed the progress achieved in the partnership, as summarized in the following conclusions of the Presidency:

(a) The Stuttgart conference showed that three and a half years after the inaugural conference in Barcelona, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership has developed and strengthened and has given proof of its viability in sometimes delicate and difficult circumstances. The discussions have proven the partnership to be solid and lasting. The conference achieved its main goal, giving additional impetus to the partnership while clearly

confirming the goals set out in the Barcelona Declaration, namely, to turn the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation through the strengthening of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable and balanced economic and social development, the fight against poverty and the promotion of greater understanding between cultures. Members recalled the priority accorded in the partnership to the protection and promotion of human rights and agreed to further concentrate activities in priority areas, to increase the involvement of actors outside central Governments and to make the partnership more action-oriented and visible. They also emphasized the fundamental importance of intraregional and subregional cooperation and integration in all three chapters;

(b) The Mediterranean region requires a comprehensive and balanced approach in order to address common security concerns, strengthen cooperation and adopt measures conducive to stability. By enhancing comprehensive stability the Barcelona process will furthermore contribute to the solution of tensions and crises in the area. A key factor towards this end will be the elaboration of a Euro-Mediterranean charter for peace and stability. Ministers welcomed the guidelines for elaborating a Euro-Mediterranean charter submitted to them as an informal working document, and assigned the group of senior officials the task of working out a comprehensive schedule in order to complete the elaboration of the charter by the next ministerial conference. According to the guidelines, the charter will serve as an instrument for the implementation of the principles of the Barcelona Declaration where issues of peace and stability are concerned. For this purpose it will provide for an enhanced political dialogue as well as the evolutionary and progressive development of partnership-building measures, good neighbourhood relations, regional cooperation and preventive diplomacy. The primary function of the enhanced political dialogue will be the prevention of tensions and crises, as well as the maintenance of peace and stability by means of cooperative security. All decisions will be taken by consensus;

(c) The progress achieved so far in developing partnership-building measures, in spite of prevailing difficulties, is encouraging and should be sustained and reinforced with a view to exploring new areas of cooperation. There is an agreement to reinforce the political dialogue in areas such as the fight against terrorism, organized crime and illicit drug trafficking in order to identify appropriate measures for joint action;

(d) Financial and economic cooperation continue to be a key component of the partnership for the objective of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area by 2010, the process of economic transition and investment, in particular foreign direct investment, and of achieving an area of shared prosperity. By the end of 1999, community financial assistance is expected to be in line with the 4.685 billion euros worth of commitments referred to in the Barcelona Declaration for the period from 1995 to 1999. For the same period, the European Investment Bank's lending could reach 4.8 billion euros. These contributions are important as a catalyst for reforms in partner countries. In this context, the European Union has confirmed that its assistance for the period from 2000 to 2006 will again reflect the high priority that it attaches to relations with its Mediterranean partners. Free-trade agreements among Mediterranean partners and the reinforcement in general of South-South cooperation are essential for the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area. Economic transition must pay due recognition to the fact that partners face major social challenges that demand determined efforts to improve the standard of living of less-favoured groups through well-targeted interventions to avoid increasing unemployment and to improve the social situation;

(e) The Stuttgart conference reaffirmed the importance of the cultural, social and human dimension to the partnership's success and to the attainment of its overall goals. Activities in the third chapter of the Barcelona process mainly cover good governance and human rights, education, youth, health, women's participation, migration and human exchanges, culture, dialogue between cultures, civilizations and civil society, the fight against international crime, in particular drug trafficking and terrorism, and the fight against racism and xenophobia;

(f) In order to broaden the basis of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the involvement of a wide circle of actors outside central Governments must be encouraged (regional and local authorities, economic and social partners, the business community and non-governmental organizations). The development of a parliamentary dimension is gathering momentum (a meeting in Brussels organized by the European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Presidents of Parliaments held in Palma de Mallorca, Spain). The strengthening of the dialogue between Governments and civil society and a new impetus towards decentralized co-operation are also needed. The meeting held in The Hague on 2 March 1999 provided an opportunity for a frank discussion on the important and delicate issue of migration and human exchanges, and it was agreed that work should be pursued in this area as well as in the field of health and social welfare;

(g) With regard to the relationship between the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and other activities undertaken in the interest of peace, stability and development in the region, in particular the Middle East peace process, the Stuttgart conference confirmed that the Barcelona process was not intended to replace these initiatives and activities, but to contribute to their success. The Barcelona Declaration made clear that these processes should be regarded as complementary. Ministers reiterated their firm commitment to the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the faithful implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East, including the principle of land for peace, the Oslo Accords and the more recent Wye River Memorandum. They called for the resumption of peace talks on all negotiating tracks and for the immediate implementation of Council resolution 425 (1978).

6. The Presidency's conclusions of the Berlin European Council (24 and 25 March 1999) reaffirmed the support of the European Union for a negotiated settlement in the Middle East peace process to reflect the principle of land for peace and to ensure the security, both collective and individual, of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The European Union welcomes the decision by the Palestinian National Union and associated bodies to reaffirm the nullification of the provision in the Palestinian national charter, which called for the destruction of Israel, and to reaffirm their commitment to recognize and live in peace with Israel. However, the European Union expressed its concern at the current deadlock in the peace process and called upon the parties to implement fully and immediately the Wye River Memorandum, to reaffirm their commitments to the basic principles established within the framework of Madrid, Oslo and subsequent agreements in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and urged them to agree on an extension of the transitional period established by the Oslo agreements. The European Union called in particular for an early resumption of final status negotiations in the coming months on an accelerated basis and for these to be brought to a prompt conclusion and not to be prolonged indefinitely. The European Union believes that it should be possible to conclude the negotiations within a target period of one year. It expressed its readiness to work to facilitate an early conclusion to the negotiations. The European Union urged both parties to refrain from activities that prejudge the outcome of those final status negotiations and from any activity contrary to international law, including all settlement activity, and to fight incitement and violence. The European Union reaffirmed the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination, including the option of statehood, and looks forward to the early fulfilment of this right. It appeals to the parties to strive in good faith for a negotiated solution on the basis of the existing agreements without prejudice to this right, which is not subject to any veto. The European Union is convinced that the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and through negotiations would be the best guarantee of Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region. The European Union also called for an early resumption of negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace process, leading to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The contribution of the Berlin Declaration and recent events in the region seem to encourage new prospects for building confidence, promoting stability and the peace process.

7. Since its institutionalization in 1992, the WEU Mediterranean dialogue has constituted a multilateral Euro-Mediterranean exchange in security and military matters, involving information-sharing and confidence-building. The coordination of the activities in this area and their coherence with the Mediterranean activities of the European Union and NATO is undertaken by the WEU Mediterranean Group. The dialogue is based on seven principles: regular dialogue as a basis for stability, transparency, confidence-building, conflict prevention, sufficiency of the conventional armed forces, peaceful settlement of conflicts and non-proliferation, particularly of weapons of mass destruction. During the past few months and under the Italian presidency, the WEU Mediterranean Group has also started to consider how the WEU Mediterranean dialogue could contribute to the Barcelona process.

8. The European Union welcomed the readiness of the member nations of Eurofor and Euromarfor to develop cooperative actions with those countries as agreed in the Paris Declaration of May 1997. In October 1997 a presentation of those forces was made in Brussels in the framework of the Barcelona process.

9. The NATO Mediterranean dialogue includes a new dimension since the Madrid Summit (8 and 9 July 1997) with the establishment of the Mediterranean Cooperation Group. The new strategic concept adopted by NATO Heads of State and Government at their summit meeting in Washington, D.C. in April 1999 states that the Mediterranean is an area of special interest to the alliance and reaffirms the cooperative approach of NATO to security. NATO has

committed itself to developing progressively the political, civil and military aspects of the dialogue with the aim of achieving close cooperation with and more active involvement by countries that are partners in this dialogue. An international seminar on the Mediterranean dialogue and the new NATO was held in Valencia, Spain, from 24 to 26 February 1999.

10. The Mediterranean partners have been involved in OSCE activities in one way or another since the start of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe/OSCE process with the active support of the European Union. This dialogue has been institutionalized in regular meetings of the Mediterranean Contact Group, which meets in Vienna with the Mediterranean cooperation partners, and allows the exchange of information and points of view on a whole range of security issues.

11. The Barcelona Declaration included in its declaration of principles the promotion of regional security by acting in favour of nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation through adherence to and compliance with a combination of international and regional non-proliferation regimes and arms control and disarmament agreements, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and/or regional arrangements such as weapon-free zones, including their verification regimes, as well as by fulfilling in good faith their commitments under arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, stating that the parties should pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and their delivery systems. The parties would, furthermore:

(a) Consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms;

(b) Refrain from developing military capacity beyond their legitimate defence requirements, while at the same time reaffirming their resolve to achieve the necessary degree of security and mutual confidence with the lowest possible levels of troops and weaponry, and adhere to the Convention on Chemical Weapons.

12. The European Union is convinced that greater transparency in military issues will induce stability at the regional level. Worldwide transparency in armaments is an important concept for building confidence and security among States, and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important and concrete measure in this respect. The member States of the European Union believe that every effort should be made to secure the widest possible participation in the Register and to improve its effectiveness, including the provision of nil reports and other relevant information.

13. The European Union calls upon countries worldwide and in the Mediterranean region to join efforts to achieve the objective of total elimination of anti-personnel landmines worldwide as soon as possible. The European Union also believes that the issue of small arms and light weapons is an important one and recalls its joint action of 17 December 1998 to combat the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons.

14. The European Union regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and is committed to the achievement of its universality. At the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the European Union took the opportunity to enhance a constructive dialogue with countries in the region. The European Union has expressed support for the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and emphasized the importance of additional protocols to safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency as an effective measure to prevent nuclear proliferation and foster mutual confidence. In this respect the European Union encourages the Mediterranean countries to support the signature and ratification of the protocols. The European Union has also urged all States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

15. The European Union recalls its Common Position, adopted on 17 May 1999, on the progress necessary for a conclusion by 2000 of a legally binding verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, to which the European Union attaches great significance as one of the main objectives in the area of non-proliferation.

16. The European Union calls upon all States of the Mediterranean region that have not done so to adhere to all the legally binding instruments negotiated on a multilateral basis in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to strengthen peace and cooperation in the region.

Qatar

[Original: English]
[15 June 1999]

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations has the honour to inform the Secretary-General that the State of Qatar has no views or comments on this resolution and believes that the views and opinions of the Mediterranean countries should be taken in consideration as they are the concerned countries in this respect in accordance with the respective terms of the above-mentioned resolution.